AI or Human Beauty Ideals? Objectification Cues in Female Fashion Influencers

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Marta Mensa holds a Ph.D. in Advertising from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain) and a postdoctoral specialization in gender and advertising from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Mexico). She is an Assistant Professor of Advertising at the Mayborn School of Journalism at the University of North Texas. Her research focuses on representations of gender and race in advertising and social media. She lived for 20 years in three different Latin American countries (Chile, Mexico, and Peru). She also gained professional experience in the advertising industry at Leo Burnett.

Dr. Jeongmin Ham is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Advertising at the University of Florida. Her research explores how virtual and AI influencers, designed with highly realistic human-like appearances and behaviors, leverage digital narratives and storytelling strategies on social media to enhance brand perceptions and address negative consumer attitudes. Her broader research interests include the intersection of AI and advertising, as well as emerging media such as video games, virtual reality, and mixed reality. Dr. Ham's work have been published in leading journals such as the *Journal of Advertising, Journal of Interactive Advertising, Journal of Advertising Research, Computers in Human Behavior,* and *Telematics and Informatics*, among others.

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Abstract

As AI influencers increasingly populate fashion social media feeds alongside human influencers, questions remain about how these digitally constructed bodies reproduce or reshape objectification processes. This study examines differences in objectification-related visual cues between human and AI female fashion influencers using real-world social media content. Drawing on objectification theory, a content analysis compares demographic characteristics, body representation, dress, pose, and presentation strategies across influencer types. Results indicate that AI influencers exhibit greater racial diversity but are more concentrated in youthfulness, thinness, and overt sexualization, including higher levels of revealing attire and sexually suggestive poses. In contrast, human influencers display greater variation in body type and age and more frequently convey femininity through subtler cues such as feminine touch and everyday dress. These findings extend objectification theory into AI-mediated influencer marketing and offer practical insights for advertisers navigating the growing use of AI influencers in fashion.

Keywords: AI influencers, social media influencers, fashion marketing, social media engagement, objectification